

but occasionally someone does it. Such an instance has lately come under our observation, and it is wonderful how much the comparison suggested tells against our boastful and advertising rivals of that foreign communion. If there is any virtue or advantage in such public notices—as Romanists seem to think—the thing had better be done well and thoroughly on our side. It is certainly “a game two can play at.”

IRISH PRIMITIVE METHODISTS “have and hold” bravely the singular distinction of adhering closely to the plan and principle of their founder. They “stick to the Church; they form a pious guild within the Church. It is well that such a remarkable instance of pure survival should be noted and encouraged, if only for the purpose of proving how far the great mass of so-called “Methodists” have gone astray, and how dangerous such experiments in supplementing the Church’s organic action may become. It may also be worth while to consider who would be pronounced in a court of law to be the legal representatives, in case the matter ever came into dispute on a question of money or property.

CLUBS, ORDERS, CIRCLES, ETC.

There is something peculiarly attractive about the idea of meeting and stereotyping an organization intended to band together those who hold similar views on any subject or policy in Church or State. At first sight nothing seems more innocent, and even commendable, than such a proceeding; to oppose it or gainsay it, would appear to be a thankless task, much better left undone. Of course, this sort of “toleration” could not apply to any conspiracy against the welfare of the community, as generally understood. Such organizations would necessarily be excepted from public sufferance, sympathy, or encouragement. But, supposing the object to be unobjectionable from this point of view, the natural and general inclination would be to say: “Go on, by all means; and organize as perfectly as you can.” The fact is that people feel how true that maxim is—“Whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well.” Organizations are good—

WITHIN BOUNDS.

Even numerically, bounds are required; otherwise the very multiplicity of societies becomes a public nuisance. It is, in fact, pretty generally felt and confessed that the tendency to organize into “cliques” has been carried to excess. It has a way of wasting and “frittering away” one’s time. Some men’s lives are one long *nightmare* of “everlasting meetings” about this, that and the other. The thing has become a standing joke—and that fact alone detracts very considerably from the working force of these organizations for the very purposes for which they are formed. What is laughed at is very likely to become despised; and then it is sure to be both misused and presently disused. One may like “fox-terriers” as a species, or “black and tan,” or “cocker spaniels”; but when he is pestered to join a “society for promoting the breeding” of any of the pets, his liking is prone to turn sour with surfeit!

THE THING IS OVERDONE.

We know how it is in Church matters, too; those of us who happen to live in a modern “live parish.” There is a perpetual whirl of demands on one’s time. Every evening, of course, some guild meets; many an afternoon is broken into by “overflow” meetings, and even the mornings do not escape. The worst of it is that when it

comes to the question of diminishing the number, one does not know where to begin—which of these confessedly useful objects should “go to the wall” in the crush—be drowned, in order that the rest of the interesting brood may have enough to live upon, that is, enough time. The next effort is to combine and form more comprehensive associations. But after everything possible has been done in that direction, a vast host of organizations—“indispensable”—remains. So we have to make the best of it. These Church difficulties have their counterpart in the State, and are

MORE INJURIOUS;

because they have not the safeguards (moral) which naturally limit injurious effects in religious circles. The evil of “multiplicity” is felt in secular matters, but there is the additional evil of a kind of crossing, or traversing, of the courses of justice—not merely in the courts, but in such things as arbitrations, and even between man and man singly. Take the case of a plaintiff who wants to recover a debt owing to him, and neglected by the debtor. He naturally employs a lawyer. The lawyer happens to be a member of the same club as the debtor, but accepts the case. Henceforth, he is *pulled two ways*: one impelling him to do his best for his client, the other causing him to modify this duty by the cross “duty” of making it easy for his friend of the club to evade the debt! The difficulty is still further complicated, and the rights of the plaintiff imperilled, if the other side—the defendant—employs a lawyer who is a member of the same club. These two lawyers have to make things as pleasant as possible for one another—a very unpleasant position for the unfortunate plaintiff! If we are not very much mistaken, such cases do occur.

WHAT CHANCE HAS JUSTICE?

in a public arena “honeycombed” by such clubs, etc.? There is only a “thin veil” of religious restraint to prevent the perpetration of perpetual acts of gross injustice. How far is that thin veil likely to deter men from catering to their own and their friends’ interest—in defiance of the behests of simple justice? Poor justice! We fear it stands but small chance of getting its reasonable demands granted in such a babel of clamorous interests as public life presents at present, formed everywhere into contending “rings” or cliques. We have not supposed the action of anything worse than “unconscious bias” in swaying employees from the straight line of duty in attending exclusively to their clients’ interests. How far off is the lower level of conscious bribery and fraud?

“SERVING TWO MASTERS”

is just as hard as ever it was, and just as sure to lead to the Bible-pointed result—men will get accustomed too soon to the sensation of being more or less consciously swayed into a crooked line of action, where—not duty and right, but—financial advantage, will turn the scale. We know how it is “across the line.” Are we quite safe from a similar condition of public affairs? True, we have some safeguards still, which they have long ago thrown away; but we must not suppose that any artificial, or superficial, barriers will last long in the face of selfish interest. That element in human life has

AN OVERMASTERING EFFECT.

The only safe plan is for the Church to take up the matter and go down to the very root of the thing. We need to build up such a strong type of religion that it will be able to stand without

these innumerable organizations, and be able to impress upon the whole community the indelible stamp of Divine law as over-ruling all rules of fraternity in any and every club, order, circle or society—associated for any purpose whatever. Public sentiment needs to be leavened with this great principle so thoroughly that no one will ever think of gainsaying it.

LOVE FOR CHRIST.

Let us cast one rapid glance at what has been done for the love of Christ. The test of love is sacrifice. Let history tell of the sacrifices inspired by the love of Christ. Look at the Apostles, who were cast into prison, were tortured, torn with scourges, were destitute, afflicted, tormented, and yet rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name. Take a glance next at the Coliseum at Rome. Who is that old man in the arena? Look at the fire of love in his eyes, listen to the firm tones of his voice: “Let not your wild beasts deal gently with me.” It is his zeal for Christ which makes him long to prove it by constancy in this most cruel, barbarous death. Again, who is that beautiful girl? The son of the Roman prefect has asked her in marriage. Will she but cast a few grains of incense to the idol, she is free—she is his. But she has given her faith to Christ, and her head rolls beneath the stroke of the executioner. Was she mad? If so, it was for the love of Christ.

Look again. There is a mother surrounded by her children; one by one they are taken from her and put to death. The last, a child six years old, remains; she trembles. Why? Not for herself—for this last and worst pang of all; but for the child, lest his faith should fail; and with words and caresses she encourages him, and carries him in her arms to death, to make the last sacrifice for Christ. Was she mad? If it were so, it was for the love of Christ.

This is the kind of love which has sustained the martyrs in the midst of the most excruciating tortures, and made so many to be “numbered with God’s saints in glory everlasting”—a love before which the tyrant has trembled in astonishment, the executioner turned pale. It is the secret of religion; it is, in the language of St. Paul, the watchword of the Church: “The love of Christ constraineth us.”

WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF US.

The cultivation of a certain character; a reverent sense of creaturely dependence on God; a child-like trust in His love and care; a fervent gratitude for His redeeming love, and a corresponding love for Him; a purity which shrinks from every thought of evil; a strong, vivid realization of the unseen world, which will result in making us rightly estimate the pleasures and riches and honours of this; a Christ-like, unselfish love for our fellow-men, and a cheerful, earnest devotion to their welfare; a diligent use of the time which God gives us; a conscientious cultivation of those powers of body and mind and spirit which He has given to us, to be developed and used in His service: a careful custody of all the senses, that none of them may offend; an elimination by His grace of the faults of our general nature and our particular disposition, and a painstaking restoration of our character to the likeness of Jesus Christ; a thoughtful and thorough performance of all our relative duties to parents, children, brothers, sisters, masters, servants, friends, neighbours, to the family, the nation, the Church, to man, to God.

But who is sufficient for these things? “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Cor. xii. 9).

Whatever God bids us do, He gives us at the same time power to do, if we will to do it. No natural inability of ours is really a hindrance to doing what God bids. The man with a withered hand, for instance, when Christ bade him stretch it forth, might have replied: “I cannot, Lord; it is withered”; but he made the endeavour in faith, and Christ gave him the power. Even when he cried in a loud voice to a dead man to come forth out of his grave, Lazarus came forth, though dead and bound hand and foot, in his grave

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